



March 25, 2009

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing to urge your support of the **Family Leave Insurance Act (H.R. 1723)**, **groundbreaking legislation that would provide workers with up to 12 weeks of paid leave for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) purposes**, including to care for a new child, a seriously-ill family member or an injured servicemember in their family, or to recover from their own serious illness.

**Congress should waste no time in passing this bill, which would make it possible for working people to take time off to care for their own serious health needs or those of their families without jeopardizing their economic security.** Allowing working parents to care for and bond with a new child lays the foundation for healthy child development. In addition, when family members provide care at home, sick children recover faster, hospital stays are shorter, and paid in-home care needs for the elderly are reduced.

**Working people have few options if they need *paid* family and medical leave.** Since the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was passed in 1993, working people have taken job-protected leave more than 100 million times to recover from their own serious illness, to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child. Yet, millions of workers cannot afford to take the unpaid leave the FMLA provides. Among FMLA-qualified workers who need family and medical leave but do not take it, three in four (78 percent) said they could not afford to miss a paycheck. Low wage workers have even fewer options for paid leave. Two in five low-income workers have no leave of any kind—no paid family leave, no paid sick days and no paid vacation days. California and New Jersey are the only states that have paid leave programs and Washington will soon follow.

**The Family Leave Insurance Act would provide workers at a covered employer with up to 12 weeks of paid leave for FMLA purposes**, including to care for a new child, a seriously-ill family member or to recover from their own serious illness; to care for an injured servicemember in their family; or to address issues arising out of a family member's deployment. It would also enable workers to use paid leave to care for a seriously-ill domestic partner, grandchild, grandparent or sibling.

The Family Leave Insurance Act would help meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the workforce—low-wage workers. **Workers on leave would receive wage replacement based on a sliding scale.** Those who earn less would receive a greater percentage of their income in wage

1875 connecticut avenue, nw ~ suite 650 ~ washington, dc 20009 ~ phone: 202.986.2600 ~ fax: 202.986.2539

email: [info@nationalpartnership.org](mailto:info@nationalpartnership.org) ~ web: [www.nationalpartnership.org](http://www.nationalpartnership.org)

replacement. For those earning more than \$97,000 a year, wage replacement would be capped at 40 percent of \$97,000.

**Under the Family Leave Insurance Act, employers and workers would share the cost**, each paying a small payroll premium equal to 0.2 percent of a worker's income into a fund. For a worker making the national median income, the premium amounts to approximately \$7 per month. Small employers and their employees would each pay 0.1 percent of a worker's income, with the federal government contributing the other half of the premium. Self-employed individuals would pay 0.4 percent. A worker must have paid into the system for six months and have worked at her or his current employer for 625 hours to be eligible. The legislation covers all non-federal employers with two or more employees. The self-employed can voluntarily join the program.

We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to our nation's working families by supporting the Family Leave Insurance Act. To lend your name as a cosponsor, please contact Jeff Hild with Congressman Pete Stark at (202) 225-5065 or [jeff.hild@mail.house.gov](mailto:jeff.hild@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

National Partnership for Women & Families